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**EXCLUSIVE PATRICK MACNEE INTERVIEW!**

**WHY WOMEN LOVE JOHN STEED!**

**PATRICK McGOOHAN: DARING TO BE DANGEROUS**

Preview: Marvel Comic's Nick Fury: Agent of SHIELD

Plus, Bond Becomes a Senior Citizen?

And columns, interviews, news and much, much more . . .



# Patrick McGoohan

## *Daring to Be Dangerous*



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By Dave Rogers

A tall athletic figure emerges from a federal building in Washington D.C., lights a cigarette and reveals his features. He then crosses to a sleek white sports car, throws his mackintosh into the rear seat and drives away.

Throughout this sequence, a voice-over narration informed viewers that, "Every government has its secret service branch: America, the C.I.A.; France, Deuxieme Bureau and England, M.I.5. N.A.T.O. also has its own. A messy job. That's when they call on me,

or someone like me. Oh yes, my name is Drake, John Drake."

This is how British television viewers were first introduced to **Danger Man**, John Drake, in September of 1960. The voice belonged to six feet two inch, New York-born Irishman, Patrick McGoohan. McGoohan after spending his childhood days on the family farm in County Leitrim, Ireland, entered the acting profession and swiftly carved a distinguished reputation for himself and earning many plaudits for his

film/television work.

In those formative years preceeding **Danger Man**, McGoohan had played a wide variety of roles culminating with his role as a space traveller on **The Greatest Man in the World**, a 1959 television satire based on a short James Thurber story. This role led to him being offered the part of John Drake in the new and exciting 25-minute spy series being planned by Lew Grade's ITC production company.

A man respected for his integrity in

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refusing to appear in anything he considered second-rate, the pragmatic McGoochan (at the time reputedly Britain's highest paid TV actor—a weekly figure of \$2,000 was postulated by the media, though McGoochan himself disputed this and added that to pay anyone such a fee was ridiculous) was nevertheless a star. He swiftly brought his star status to bear by laying down the ground rules for the character.

## Molding Drake

He began by insisting that, unlike Bond, Drake should be one of the first fictional television agents **not** into bondage or violence and that the character be a moral fellow. Though the 'violence' in *Danger Man* was both frequent and heavy, it seldom went further than to mirror the boy's own adventure comic variety—sadism was out, good old fashioned fisticuffs was in.

During the final weeks of production, McGoochan, a man who has confessed his abhorrence for cheap sex and unnecessary violence, said, "I don't like violence, and you will notice that Drake always fences around violence. He is not an anti-law hero like Bond. I mean, take

away from Bond his women and expertise with a menu, and there is not much left. Bond is a not so-good guy. And that is why—if you can imagine it—Drake would always beat Bond in a fight."

He later added, characteristically, "Mind you, this is not to say anything against Sean Connery. I'm just attacking something that is opposite to many of the ideals Drake symbolizes and what goes in a film is not necessarily right for

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television." Certainly, if one remembers that this was pre-Bond (well, at least the filmed version), operator Drake could certainly hold his own in the rough-and-tumble stakes. The fights, at least one per episode, were exciting and suspenseful. Having set Drake's character traits, McGoochan, ever the perfectionist, turned his attention to the

action sequences and insisted that they too were planned to the very last punch.

Peter Perkins, who served as fight arranger for the series, recalled that, "Although there are cliches in screen fights just as there are in dialogue and story action, McGoochan wouldn't have anything to do with them. Every single fight had to be scripted on paper first, then approved by McGoochan himself. He would never repeat anything and everything had to be **possible**. He wouldn't let doubles take the risks and did everything himself." In McGoochan's words, Drake's fists were always as virtuous as his cause.

Further concessions were gained when McGoochan insisted that Drake should only win against overwhelming odds if he **deserved** to do so. Further, that Drake should fight his battles like a gentleman, with more than a slight nod to the Queensbury Rules.

"Drake is not a thick-ear specialist," he said. "There is action, plenty of it, but no brutal violence. If a man dies, it is not just another cherry off the tree. When Drake fights, he fights **clean**. He abhors bloodshed, and though he carries a gun, he doesn't use it unless it's absolutely



## The Vacation

Jacqueline Ellis as Veronica and Patrick McGoochan as John Drake



necessary. He doesn't shoot to kill. He prefers to use his wits, a person with a sophisticated background in philosophy."

This philosophy (or, as McGoohan himself put it, "This struggle for perfection and relentless demand for reality") was carried over into Drake's encounters with the fair sex. Where Bond was shown uncaring in his treatment of the opposite sex, Drake took a similar line to his involvement with thugs and though he obviously appealed to women, McGoohan asked that Drake carefully avoided romantic entanglements and tempered his relations with women with the knowledge that his career was far too perilous for him to allow his heart to rule his head. So, though each story of **Danger Man** had its fair share of attractive actresses who were shown falling for him in a big way (and would have no doubt followed him anywhere in the world), Drake never became too heavily involved.

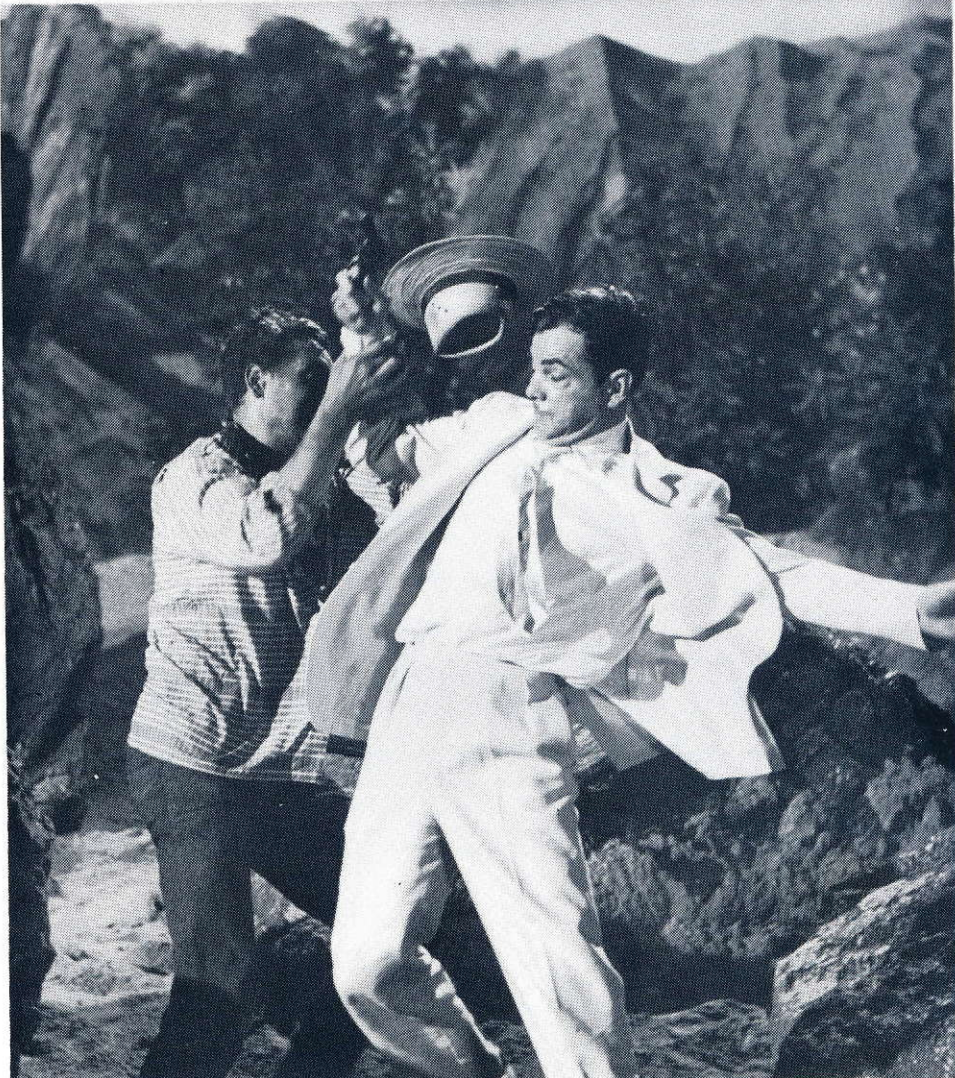
With such care and attention to detail, it's hardly surprising that the series was, in its day, hailed as one of the most colorful adventure series ever filmed for television. Viewers were soon hooked by Drake's weekly adventures.

## NATO's Danger Man

The stories themselves depicted the exploits of John Drake, a special security operative for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), who was free to go wherever duty called. His adventures were played out against a panoramic view of the world's trouble spots and depicted his attempts to rid the world of subversive elements and solve situations that jeopardized his objectives.

Drake took risks, but they were calculated risks in the cause of world peace. He is handsome, athletic, fearless. A man who faces danger every day of his life. A man who, although he detests physical violence, has to fight unscrupulous enemies by any means available to him. McGoohan summed the character up as, "A man who has done lots of jobs in his time. He has seen a lot of the world and has studied people. He is also an athlete who has reached the stage of wanting to do something different, something exciting, but also something that will do good. When he comes into contact with international politics, he finds himself embarking on this new career."

**Danger Man** was international in both outlook and setting. No two stories found



## Find and Destroy

John Drake and Enrico (Alex Mango) tangle

Drake in the same location. One week, Drake could be found in Paris, the next, Rio. A week later he was trudging through dense African foliage. From Washington to London, Singapore to the opium dens of Hong Kong, Drake went wherever his particular brand of justice could be used to best effect. Ironically,

*International intrigue, danger, glamor, espionage, assassination, sabotage, etc. . . John Drake faced them all throughout the 39 half hour series.*

in one episode, "View From the Villa," Drake is ensconced in an Italian village—in reality, a Welsh holiday resort called Portmerion. Now, where have I seen McGoohan in that setting before!?

A further distinction held by the series was that John Drake preceeded the later film/tv spy genre 'softwear/gadgets' craze by several years (Sean Connery's

gimmick-ridden attache case in **From Russia With Love** was still almost three years away.) Drake was possibly the first theatrical secret agent to be equipped with a plethora of gadgets. Tie-pins that served as cameras, cherries containing microphones and an electric shaver that doubled as a tape-recorder/transmitter were just a few of the many devices invented by the scriptwriters.

One of the more well known scriptwriters was Brian Clemens (later of **Avengers** fame) who, in an episode called "Time to Kill," kitted Drake out with an unusual and highly ingenious set of gadgets which will serve to illustrate this point. Drake is seen parking his car in a forest clearing. Throwing open the door, he lays a blanket on the ground, reaches beneath the driver's seat and produces two long French loaves. These are broken in two to reveal that one contains a small metal container in which nestle seven rifle bullets, while





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## Deadline

Drake always put words before fists

the other holds a rifle trigger-mechanism.

He next reached behind the steering column and picks up a small everyday thermos flask which, once the stopper has been unscrewed, reveals a silencer. A tug beneath the dash board and Drake holds an ammo-magazine which is then placed on the blanket beside a rifle butt found secreted in a false compartment in the car door, and further pieces of the puzzle (a telescopic sight and a rifle barrel) are found hidden beneath the car's bonnet. To anyone searching the vehicle, simple everyday items. But in Drake's hands, a deadly death-wielding device.

Further realism and incentive was brought to the production by the presence of its creator, Ralph Smart, who at the time was widely respected as being one of the top three television producers. Smart's previous credits included such popular programs as *The Adventures of William Tell*, *The Buccaneers* and *The Invisible Man*, and his infectious manner and enthusiasm spurred the production to new heights.

"It is our intention," said Smart, "to present pictorial and interesting backgrounds as well as fast-moving, exciting shows. Today, television can bring the

whole world into every viewer's home. The popularity of travelogs proves how much interest there is in faraway places and in *Danger Man*. We intend to scour the world for our settings."

This he achieved, in spades. Furthermore, not content to simply produce the series, Smart also took the directors chair for several of the episodes, wrote five other stories and co-scripted twenty-one others.

## Drake Faced It All

As to the stories themselves, a short resume of some of the early episodes serves to prove that they certainly provided more than their fair share of thrills for the avid viewer.

One of the first episodes screened (the previously mentioned "View From the Villa") found Drake in Rome and assigned to unravel the mysterious disappearance of a banker who is directly responsible for gold bullion worth five million and forms part-payment of the United States' NATO contribution. Drake finds his investigations blocked by a mysterious and beautiful Italian fashion designer who is secretly the head of a murder-for-sale combine. Drake's name is at the top of her 'hit' list.

"Time to Kill" switches the location

to Paris and depicts Drake's attempts to locate a vicious international killer. His efforts to do so are hampered when he finds himself handcuffed to a beautiful Swedish girl. Oriental intrigue in China forms the location for "The Journey Ends Halfway" when Drake investigates the disappearance of a doctor. A drugs syndicate and opium ring, ("Position of Trust") gun-runners and terrorism ("Bury the Dead")—international intrigue, danger, glamour, espionage, assassination, sabotage etc...Drake faced them all throughout the 39 half hour stories.

Perhaps Drake is best described as "the thinking-man's hero." Certainly the stories were logical and realistic and never went "over the top" or insulted the viewer's intelligence.

The last of the 39 stories was transmitted in Britain in January, 1962, but viewers hadn't seen the last of John Drake for, barely two years later, a story called "Yesterday's Enemies" herald in the first of a "new look," 50-minute *Danger Man* series and Drake was no longer working directly for NATO...but that's another story.

NEXT: An overview of the 47 fifty-minute stories, and a fully comprehensive episode guide.